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Woodrow Wilson

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

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LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

By

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In his oration in memory of the first Athenians who fell in the Peloponnesian War, Pericles commended the fitness of the Athenian public funeral, but doubted the wisdom of any speech, declaring that where men's deeds have been great they should be honored in deed only, and that the reputation of many should never depend upon the judgment or want of it of one, and their virtue exalted or not, as he spoke, well or ill. I can, in some faint measure, comprehend what was passing in the mind of the great Athenian as I stand here to-day, in this Chamber which has often resounded with his own lucid eloquence, to seek to make clear in brief speech the character and achievements of Woodrow Wilson, the twenty-eighth President of the United States.

In the case of a statesman, all experience warns us not to attempt to fix his final place in history until the generation that knew him and loved him, or hated him, shall have passed away and a new generation, to whom he was not a familiar figure, shall have come upon the stage, capable of beholding him with eyes undimmed by emotion and judging him with minds unclouded by prejudice or by passion. Loyalty and duty and reverence none the less urge us to set down, while memory is clear and events are fresh, what we know of men upon whom their fellow men placed great burdens of power, to whom whole races and nations turned in moments of peril and disaster, and upon whose decisions, from time to time, rested the courses of history. Woodrow Wilson was such a man; and, in such a spirit, I undertake to discover the sources of his power and to perceive the bases of his far-shining fame, more widespread about the earth in his lifetime than the fame of any of his predecessors in office, and more interwoven into the fabric of civilization than any of those who have gone before him, save Washington, the founder of the Republic, Jefferson, the fountain of its idealism, and Lincoln, the exemplar of its magnanimity and the preserver of its internal unity.

The presidential office constitutes one of the glories of the framers of our Government and the presidential succession a miracle of good fortune in the hazard of democratic politics and a constant tribute to the sober instincts of popular judgment. The makers of the Constitution apparently forgot their fear of tyranny when they

created the Presidency and seemed to proceed on the principle that if you place immense authority in a man's hands you kill his greed for usurpation and awake in him a magic capacity and a solemn purpose to transform his weaknesses into strength and his unworthiness into worthiness.

Some American Presidents have been commonplace men, but none of them has ever betrayed his trust or stained his honor; and from George Washington to the present hour the line of American Presidents have surpassed in character, ability, and devotion any line of kings and prime ministers known to me in modern history. They have not always been scholars. Indeed, few of them have been scholars, but when chosen, and the method of their choice sometimes bewilders the reflective and grieves the judicious, they have dug out of their latent forces and brought to bear upon their awful tasks such common sense, strong wills, noble industry, uprightness of purpose, that the great office still wears a more than imperial quality to enrich the imagination and to enlist the faith of mankind.

It would have been wiser to intrust this task of interpretation to one closer to Woodrow Wilson when he was the head of the state and his will shaped the destinies of men. Such was not my privilege. My qualifications are of a simpler and a more unpretentious nature. I studied the shorter catechism, a drastic, bracing, moral tonic, with him in the Presbyterian Church of which his father, Joseph R. Wilson, was pastor, in the old city of Wilmington, N. C., my birthplace, where from time to time Thomas Woodrow Wilson would appear at home from college, to my younger eyes a tall, slender youth of curious homeliness, detachment, and distinction.

As a child sitting in the pew of my father, who was an officer in that church, and looking into the finely molded face of Joseph R. Wilson and listening to the words he spoke, I had my first perception that beauty and music and power to move even young hearts lay in the English tongue when fitly joined to substantial thought and serious eloquence; and he has remained to me, as he did to his famous son, through the discipline of a generation of sermons, a standard of good preaching to which it is a delight and a comfort now and again to repair. The world owes a great debt to Joseph R. Wilson; for, though the son studied under many masters, none influenced him so strongly as his father, who bred in him an impatience of dullness and diffuse thinking, a precise sense of word values, a scorn of priggishness and formal piety, the power to proceed straight to the core of a subject under discussion and to utter measured thoughts with a vigor and beauty that in later days and on a grander stage were destined to awaken the pride of his countrymen and to command the attention of the world.

I do the day's work at the University of Virginia, where Woodrow Wilson "learned the law and the reason thereof." It came to pass that we were associated in the task of training American youth, and I became his friend by reason of the ties that bind men together in such endeavor; and further, because I thought I saw in him, in a new era in the evolution of American democracy, a promise of liberal leadership and of sympathy that never slept for the disadvantaged men who bear the burdens of the world. The sturdiest romantic

tradition of American public life has been the rise into power and fame of the youth who struggled up to his heights from humble and unlovely beginnings. The career of Woodrow Wilson is no part of such tradition, for his racial inheritances and cultural opportunities were about as strong and fine as an American youth can have. His forbears for eight generations belonged to the Scotch race, perhaps the most active of the intellectual aristocracies which govern the United States, modified in the direction of a kindling imagination and a quickened joy of life and battle by Celtic admixture and residence. His parents, his ancestors on both sides, and his associates on all sides were religious men and women of Presbyterian faith.

He was the son, as I have said, of a Presbyterian minister of such distinction that it was in his house that the Southern Presbyterian Church was organized when the Civil War came to rend even the religious life of the Nation. His mother was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, in Carlisle, England. He married, in his young manhood, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. His grandfather, Thomas Woodrow, for whom he was named, was a learned, doughty servant of God, and his uncle, James Woodrow, was a modern-minded Presbyterian minister, who, in his day, upheld stoutly against the allegation of heresy itself the banner of liberal thought and religious tolerance. His elementary and undergraduate education was under Presbyterian influences and in Presbyterian colleges—Davidson College, North Carolina, and Princeton, the college of New Jersey. Later, at the University of Virginia, in the study of law, and at Johns Hopkins University, in the study of politics and jurisprudence, he was to broaden his training and to establish a just claim as the most carefully educated man whom the people of this democracy, somewhat wary of learning and fearful lest intellectual subtlety dull the edge of common understanding, ever dared to place at the head of the Government.

Chester A. Arthur, Grover Cleveland, and Woodrow Wilson, alone, of our long presidential line, issued out of the preacher's home into public life. Cleveland and Wilson may be called the direct contributions of the Presbyterian manse to the Nation's service; and it is not without significance that the only two great successes, since 1860, of the Democratic Party, in which they now rank as titular saints, were achieved under their leadership. They were quite dissimilar in background and qualities, as a curious fate which opposed them to each other, face to face, in dour antagonism in later life made very clear, but alike in the firmness of their wills, the fixity of their conclusions, and the sensitiveness of their consciences. Surely, the great religious faith that sent forth these two American Presidents is justified of its children.

Woodrow Wilson was born in Virginia in the year 1856, in the middle period of the nineteenth century, and, with the exception of his undergraduate years at Princeton, the first 29 years of his life were passed in five Southern States, in the study of literature, history, and jurisprudence. He did not obtain at any of the colleges in which he studied a high reputation as a technical scholar. There surrounds his college career a legend of mature culture, an impression of pursuing a steadfast aim in realms of thought not included in the curriculum, an air of self-reliance untouched by eccentricity or exclusiveness; for he could be gay and charming with the choicest of his

fellows and bold and assertive enough in the rough and tumble of college affairs. He had a way, even in youth, of moving amid the things of the mind and of demeaning himself in the society of books as if they had always been friends of his and he knew where he was going with them. The habit of respecting his mind and using it sternly and reverently clung to him throughout life. The sum of the college tradition about him is that he was a high-minded, proud-spirited, reflective, ambitious youth, never sturdy of body, eager to learn about men and affairs, and intent upon putting learning to use in action. The era in which he grew to manhood and the mood of the society in which his formative years were passed did much to fashion his ideals and to determine his ambitions.

The echoes of the great debate over the nature of the Union filled the air, and the towering figures of Calhoun and Webster yet dominated the imagination of opposing political schools. His early youth was passed away from, yet in the midst of, the tumult of the war which lay inherent in the logic of that debate. I am loath to praise any war, for all war is the collapse of human reason; but no sincerer war than this has occurred in human history. It was a war of ideals, of principles, of loyalty to ancient axioms of freedom, held dearer than life by both sides. The influence of the Civil War upon the youth of the man who was destined to be the Commander in Chief of all the forces of the undivided Republic in the greatest war of all time illustrates alike the calmness of his own mind and the sincerity of the mighty struggle itself. His people, post-revolutionary in American origin, had become southern in sentiment. He records, with deep feeling, how the passing sight of the grave face and regnant figure of Robert E. Lee, long after the war, stirred the emotions of his young heart; but there was developed in him no fierce passion of sectionalism, but rather a stern and cool will to comprehend the historic forces at play within American life, and to direct those forces toward the fulfillment of the longings of democratic society.

He was of the group of young southern-born men who knew the contributions of the South to American history, who had no apologies to offer for its part in the great struggle, ennobled by so much valor and self-sacrifice, but who felt that the South must again become whole-heartedly a part of the Federal Union it had done so much to establish. He saw about his hearthstone the faces of grim men who were subjected to such a test of manhood as our poor human nature has seldom been forced to endure. They were not men of the broadest social imagination, but they were men of intense and romantic loyalties to causes, and of an elevation of thought about the State as something to love and serve and not something to batten on or to profit by. War did not unfold to him in his far southern home any of its marching splendors and waving banners. He saw only the filthy backwash of war, its ruin and its bitterness, cities in ashes, ignoramuses in power, revenge in action, and great leaders led away to imprisonment and obloquy.

It is true that he had heard the civil struggle ended upon a sweet, clear note of "charity to all and malice to none"; and nothing in his life shows the balance of his mind better than his quiet perception of the fact that to his youth a challenge had come to help complete unfinished social and moral tasks, unpoisoned by hate and unwasted by vengeance. It might well have been within the Almighty's

inscrutable purpose to give such a man such a preparation and such a social background for a supreme far-off test, when a distraught world would have sore need of the man of faith and will who would see clearly and reason accurately, and who would not falter or turn back when once he had set his feet upon a path.

Woodrow Wilson was 29 years old when he quit the formal life of a college student. One may treat as negligible the single year he spent vainly seeking to use a mind absorbed in the philosophy of law and its application to government, in the gainful practice of that profession. The span of his life was yet to stretch over 37 years, and he was to spend 25 of those years in teaching American youth politics and government in four different institutions of learning—Bryn Mawr College, Wesleyan College, Johns Hopkins University, Princeton University. Thus the man who was to be intrusted with the most stupendous administrative task in American history, spent three-fourths of his life as student, teacher, educational administrator, and writer of books. It was not the training adapted to equip for his work a prophet of force or a master of political intrigue; Ulysses would not have prescribed it for Telemachus nor Machiavelli for his prince, but I fancy that all of us who hold the democratic faith will one day be grateful for these studious, reflective years in the life of Woodrow Wilson, when he pondered over the comparative merit of forms of government and modes of culture, when his practical mind, with its adventurous and romantic passion for action received unfolding for a mighty purpose.

It was in the still air of these laborious days that he reflected how to get things done after the fashion of his dreaming; when he nurtured enthusiasm for men and saw himself as their servant, when looking deep into the life of the social organism, he saw that not ideas, but ideals, conquered men's souls; when he learned calmness from Wordsworth, concentration of energy from Walter Bagehot, and with Edmund Burke discovered the real difference between a statesman and a pretender in the circumstance that one lives by the way and acts on expediency, the other lives on principles and acts for immortality; when he came to see faith as life's most substantial heroism and finally, pursuing a lonely road gained a wide, luminous view of this world, as a world ordered of God, moved by the tides of His spirit, and thus laid the basis of a fame, which one day

> Full high advanced
> Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind.

Woodrow Wilson was the first professional teacher to pass almost directly from the classroom to the White House. Thousands of Americans to-day recall with gratitude his high gifts as a teacher; and as a fellow teacher, I would care to commemorate that element of his enduring service to his countrymen. To me and to the hosts of those who teach in this land, those quiet, busy years at Princeton, as a teacher, characterized by great personal happiness in a home of culture, of intense charm, energy and growing insight, seem to constitute his real golden age. Large classes flocked to his lecture hall to applaud his varied knowledge, and to gain from him new phases of life and truth. There was beauty in the cadences of his voice and power to arouse and persuade the intellect in the clarity and orderliness of his talk, brightened by bland humor and tingling

wit. When he entered upon the presidency of Princeton, a new aspect of his qualities appeared. It was clear that he had thought deeply of the meaning of education and of universities, as molding forces in a democracy. The problem of education was to him the problem of enriching the Nation's life with minds of maturity, integrity of character, and social sympathy. "What a man ought never to forget with regard to a college," he once said at Swarthmore, "is that it is a nursery of honor and principle." He inaugurated new principles of educational contact, which now lie at the core of the development, not alone of his own university, but of all institutions of liberal culture in his country.

A dramatic struggle, marked by unusual phases of bitterness and ill will, characterized his administrative career at Princeton. Universities are little worlds in themselves, and, like the greater world about them, have a way of refusing to be reformed and of preferring to be let alone, or to be reborn into new aims and processes only under tremendous pressure and the passage of slow time. The total effect on him of all this academic warfare was the hardening of his resolution, the acquisition of formidable political skill to gain his ends, the arousing of his passion for democracy, and the fixing of his purpose to rescue universities from material control. He was born to fight for the goodness which is at the heart of things, and this ideal quickly grew into an objective of freedom which caught the eye of the Nation at the precise moment when a great tide of liberal hope and opinion was flowing in and over a generation of self-satisfaction and contentment with things as they are. Unlike most cultivated Southerners of his generation, Woodrow Wilson had the impulse to write as well as to talk and became a writer of eminence fit to claim a place in the literature of his country along with Jefferson, Madison, Lincoln, and Roosevelt.

At 29 he published his first book, Congressional Government, a postgraduate thesis, revealing the actual operations of our Government and outlining with a touch of genius his theory of the wisest and most efficient relation of the Executive to Congress. This book contained a definite system of political philosophy which he put into practice and to which he clung to the end of his career. In this respect a likeness to Thomas Jefferson appears, for each of them had developed, before he entered office, a definite theory of government and applied its doctrines to the solution of national problems. A series of seven volumes on political and historical subjects—Congressional Government—a Study in American Politics, The State—Elements of Historical and Practical Politics, Division and Reunion, George Washington, A History of the American People, Constitutional Government in the United States, and four volumes of literary and social studies—An Old Master and Other Political Essays, Mere Literature and Other Essays, Free Life, The New Freedom, When a Man Comes to Himself—came from his pen in these days. It is impossible to read these books without concluding that the guiding motive of all his studies pointed toward political life and the goal of political office.

The opportunity to enter politics seemed worlds away to the man who was writing "mere literature" of this quality in 1895—"There is more of a nation's politics to be got out of its poetry than out of all its systematic writers upon public affairs and constitutions. Epics

are better mirrors of manners than chronicles; dramas oftentimes let you into the secrets of statutes; orations stirred by a deep energy of emotion or resolution, passionate pamphlets that survive their mission because of the direct action of their style along permanent lines of thought, contain more history than parliamentary journals. It is not knowledge that moves the world, but ideals, convictions, the opinions or fancies that have been held or followed; and whoever studies humanity ought to study it alive, practice the vivisection of reading literature, and acquaint himself with something more than anatomies which are no longer in use by spirits."

In the year 1910 Woodrow Wilson withdrew from university direction and entered active politics. His last service to education was an effort, far from successful, to give to American universities what he considered a democratic regeneration in spirit, and to bring it about that the "voices of common men should murmur in their corridors." His first political declaration was an avowal that the time had come to reconceive the liberties of America, to break the dominance of cliques and machine, to confer on candidates for high office power and responsibility for leadership, to secure for all men a fairer adjustment of human relationships; and, further, that he was entering the field of politics in a new era, with no pledges to bind him and no promises to hinder him. Upon such a platform he was elected Governor of New Jersey, and in that office, and through his policies and principles, set forth in public speeches, this historian of his country, this southern-born Scotch-Irish Presbyterian teacher, an awkward circumlocution but a deadly definition of stubborn idealism, became, in 1912, the nominee of the Democratic Party for President, received a great majority in the Electoral College, and became President of the United States on March 4, 1913.

In 1916 he was renominated and reelected in the very midst of the greatest crisis in the secular history of mankind. I am conscious that I am summing up, in bald sentences, revolutionary transformations in the career and fortunes of an American citizen such as have seldom happened to any man in our annals, and never before to the teacher or scholar—the nearest approach in breathless action being the transfer of Abraham Lincoln from a main-street, second-story law office to unimagined burdens of authority. Both stories will forever enrich and adorn the epic of democracy.

Woodrow Wilson once said that the true teacher or the true artist or historian must always work for the whole impression. Working in this spirit, I can not, at this time and place, attempt even to enumerate the legislative measures which, under his leadership, went forward in the Sixty-third Congress; but I venture to claim that no such well thought out program of financial, social, and industrial reform, no such inspiring spectacle of governmental efficiency and concentrated energy, no such display of fearless devotion to public interests, moving high above the plane of partisan advantage or of private gain, has been spread before the eyes of this generation as is afforded by the list of enduring enactments which crowned the accession to power of Woodrow Wilson; and I set up the further claim that a President had come upon the great scene at a time of one of those strange failures of government to redress public grievances, who had not only the will and purpose to change the note of industrial life in the Nation, and to halt the domination of American politics by its

privileged financial interests, but also the sense of direction and skill to carry to some sort of fulfillment a policy of practical emancipation from materialism, and the restoration of equality of opportunity. The Congress that furnished the teamwork in this memorable period of legislative energy was admirable and intelligent; but leadership lay in the President, not by use of patronage or by social amenities, but by the steady drive of intellectual force which his opponents within and without his party could not resist.

The new President concluded his first inaugural with these words: "The Nation has been deeply stirred; stirred by a solemn passion, stirred by the knowledge of wrong, of ideals lost, of government too often debauched and made an instrument of evil. The feelings with which we face this new age of right and opportunity sweep across our heartstrings like some air out of God's own presence, where justice and mercy are reconciled and the judge and the brother are one. We know our task to be no mere task of politics, but a task which shall search us through and through, whether we be able to understand our time and the need of our people, whether we be indeed their spokesman and interpreter, whether we have the pure heart to comprehend and the rectified will to choose our high course of action. This is not a day of triumph; it is a day of dedication. I summon all honest men, all patriotic, all forward-looking men, to my side. God helping me, I will not fail them, if they will but counsel and sustain me!"

Passionate sincerity shines out of these moving words. It was a spiritual moment in our history. Men were looking at life with kinder and juster eyes. A new spokesman of humanity had appeared in our politics, with a will and a purpose and a program. An eager and a nipping air seemed to blow away the atmosphere of materialism which had in varying degree hung over the Capital since Lincoln's day. Not since Jefferson had a leader with such a program dwelt at Washington. If in 17 months a world war had not come to turn the thoughts of mankind to the defense of civilization itself, it is not immoderate to believe that the great reforms already inaugurated would have been followed by others equally vital, and the domestic policy of the Nation ordered in accordance with the best liberal thought of modern, self-governing communities.

But war came, apparently falling out of the blue, like some tragic drama of the high gods, upon a busy and peaceful people, bent upon working out here in a favored land some scheme of life by which every man should have liberty, without hindrance, to be what God made him. In reality, there had arrived the moment of explosion of confined passions and forces long gathering through the ages, the awful fruitage of centuries of human greed and incompetence, of malignant nationalistic ambitions, of scientific progress diverted from high ends to purposes of destruction, of vain and feeble puppets in places of power, of a European polity based on fear and balance of power, rather than reason and concert of action. In the twinkling of an eye, our gain-getting age became a brawling age of terror and revolution, to be thought of hereafter as the end of an old epoch and the beginning of a new epoch in human annals.

It has been often predicted that this greatest drama in history must needs be one day really written as a drama by some Aeschylus who will paint the darkening sky, the rushing of the wind, the tension of

the time, as catastrophe leapt to catastrophe, the movements of the bewildered antagonists amid the muttering of the storm and the lightning. In such a drama alone could one hope to find a just portrait of the peace-loving figure of the American scholar President, as he lifts his shoulders to the burdens, seeks to readjust his mind and nature, absorbed in purposes of new freedom for common men, to the tasks of the dreadful hour, and with tragic loneliness and patience grapples with events.

I saw President Wilson for the last time in the fullness of his strength on the evening of April 2, 1917. He was standing at this desk, speaking the momentous words which were to lead this democracy into war, and to teach to all free peoples, then bewildered and depressed, the meaning of the conflict, and to lift up their hearts. All mankind was his audience. The air of this hall was tense with emotion, and the dullest sensed the historic significance of the great scene. There were then etched into my mind, in lines never to be erased, the face and form and manner of Woodrow Wilson—the lithe figure, the bony structure of the forehead, the lean, long visage as of a covenanter, somber with fixed purpose. The culture of generations was in his tones, the scholar's artistry in his words, the inheritance of a gentleman's breeding in his manner, and calm courage in his discerning eyes. I was somehow reminded of the unbending lineaments and figure of Andrew Jackson, whom Woodrow Wilson resembled physically; and, in the very soul of him, morally exhibiting the same grim resolution, as of a stranger to the fear that weaklings feel.

The direction of American affairs, as the Republic swept into the current of the Great War, was in the hands of a liberal statesman, bred of democracy, firm of will, jealous of his country's honor, gifted with power to argue with cogency, capable of seeing far ahead the movements of social progress, incapable of fear, unmoved by passion or greed of conquest, intent upon justice, dreaming of peace and the righting of immemorial wrongs. I do not intend a résumé of the events of the two years and eight months intervening between the onset of war and the entrance of America into the struggle, but rather an analysis of what Prof. L. P. Jacks, a thoughtful English scholar to whom I am indebted for a better understanding of Woodrow Wilson, once called the "war mind" of Woodrow Wilson. To have taken any other primary step than the issuance of a declaration of neutrality in August, 1914, would have been the act of a madman or a superman, and Mr. Wilson was merely the trustee of the most powerful country on earth hitherto dedicated to the tradition of its own nonintervention in foreign affairs and the noninterference of European nations in cisatlantic problems.

The country was unfamiliar with European complications and unaware of the new international position decided for them, in Theodore Roosevelt's words, by fate and the march of events. Even the intellectuals who grasped the truth that the war was a conflict between two opposing schools of civilization would have been shocked by any other initial policy than the policy of neutrality. Military glory as an end in itself held no lure for President Wilson and no power to confuse his judgment, as his course in Mexico and his Mobile declaration had shown. I have little doubt as to where lay

his sympathies from the first hour of the conflict, but he was not the man in a position of vast responsibility to be swayed by sympathy or prejudice or self-interest. Rather, he was the man, careless of fleeting judgments, to seek the position of moral responsibility imposed upon the United States and to so place its power at the service of mankind that other ages would hold it in grateful remembrance. I have read the speeches of President Wilson from the beginning of the war to its end, and I find in them an amazing strength and unity. I am not troubled by the inconsistency of his early advocacy of peace and his later proclamation of "force to the limit," for there is no inconsistency.

As Lincoln with supreme wisdom planted his policy not on slavery but on union, Woodrow Wilson with a similar greatness tied his policy to the idea that the United States, the most powerful of all States, should be a servant, a minister, a friend, not a master among the nations. Never before in the history of mankind has a statesman of the first order made the humble doctrine of service to humanity a cardinal and guiding principle of world politics. As long as he thought this principle was best served by neutrality, we kept out of the war. The long series of diplomatic papers, the patience that endured the barbarism of the *Lusitania* and bore without flinching the contumely of foes and the misgivings of friends may justly be thought of as mere incidents in the evolution of this great idea. When at last the insolent brutality of the renewal of submarine warfare taught him that force alone could advance his doctrine, he took us into war. His much derided Notes to the Imperial German Government deserve rank among the enduring documents of international history, and constitute one of the most decisive arguments ever addressed to the conscience of civilization, to illustrate the solemn hesitation that ought to mark the course of rulers who carry nations into war, to give proof that in such a collapse of civilization, at least one nation should retain its poise, and to unite his countrymen while he taught the world.

When on March 5, 1914, before the war, in discussing the Panama tolls, he said "We are too big, too powerful, too self-respecting a Nation to interpret with too strained or refined a reading the words of our own promises, just because we have power enough to give us leave to read them as we please," he made clear all that subsequently possessed his mind. When a year later he said "We do not want anything that does not belong to us. Is not a Nation in that position free to serve other nations?" he revealed the heart of his policy; and so when, on the memorable night of April 2, he asked Congress to acknowledge a state of war it was to a crusade, not to a war, that his statesmanlike policy had brought his countrymen; and they could not doubt that the diplomatic victory was his, the moral victory was his, that a mighty people were behind him, that the leadership of mankind rested where democracy on a continental scale had begun, in the American Republic.

In December, 1916, the President had sought through a statement by each side of its war aims to discover if any basis of peace might be found. This inquiry exhibited diplomatic genius of the first order, for it enraged the Germans and aided the Allies to consolidate their moral position before the world. The great achievement was obscured for a moment by a storm of obloquy from superheated patriots

who misread the grim humor and misinterpreted his precise language when he declared that all sides, according to their own general statement to their own people, had the same aims.

Again, on January 22, 1917, Mr. Wilson for the last time sought mediation in a speech in which he defined the fundamental conditions of a permanent peace. No greater state paper than this exists in the records of modern states. The result of this masterstroke was to bring us nearer war, but also nearer to lasting peace, to establish him still more closely as the one dispassionate voice of mankind, and again to bring upon him an outburst of condemnation for his noblest pre-war utterance in which he used, but explained none too skillfully, the phrase "peace without victory," by which he meant that only a reconciled Europe could be a tranquil and stable Europe, and that community of power must succeed balance of power.

Still preoccupied with the thought of lasting peace, Mr. Wilson appeared before the Congress in the early winter of 1918, at the darkest moment of the allied fortunes and formulated fourteen points of peace. These generalizations were almost revolutionary in their scope and idealism and ultimately formed the general basis of the peace to be drafted; but they carried, too, a political adroitness aiming directly at putting an end to the fighting. They planted new seeds of aspiration and new hopes of justice between nations in the minds of men; and it is not easy to ostracize such ideas. Its timeliness, as well as its strength, gives to this document a place among the great charters which have marked the progress of mankind. Our other great papers, the Declaration, the Farewell Address, Virginia Bill of Rights, the Constitution, were local or continental in their application. This paper, and the complementary addresses following it, aimed at nothing less than to endow the broken and weary nations with a new order and a new life. Desperate peoples for an hour looked into the shining face of Hope, and had sight of an old heaven and a new earth arising out of horror but ennobled by the self-sacrifice of millions. In Burke's vivid phrase, he was now the Lord of the Ascendant; his speeches had the strength of battalions along the front of battle; his voice was the voice of free peoples; and all over the earth, in the great capitals, among the tribes of the desert, in the islands of the sea, men felt the molding of his thought and sensed the grandeur of his aims.

The conversion of American energies into war energies, the transformation of the American spirit and philosophy of life into war spirit and war philosophy, the actual throwing into the furnace of modern war, across 3,000 miles of sea, the resources of men and money and resolution of the American people, takes rank among the greatest practical enterprises of mankind. It may well be conceded that mistakes were made and that judgments went wrong; but "it is the grim silence of facts that counts." Military experts impartially chosen, not political generals, commanded armies in this war. No congressional committees, as in former wars, directed its strategy and confused its processes. No serious bickerings or scandals or conflicts marred the unity of its course. Far-seeing fiscal and economic legislation gave steadiness to the Nation in the vast undertaking. Men and materials flowed to the armies in the field. The genius of the Army and Navy displayed itself in war. The genius

of the President struck down the enemy morale and laid the foundations of peace. No democracy in history and few autocracies have ever given such an exhibition of efficient cooperation or earned such triumphant success.

The logic of events, to which Wilson's matchless skill in exhortation and argument had contributed so much, now decreed that in 10 months ancient dynasties would abdicate and flee, and that under American leadership the mighty war would come to an end, an armistice would be declared, and a peace conference come into being Long generations hence we shall warm our hearts at the fire of the glory that then shone about this Republic, won for it by the steadfast mind of its President, the unity of its people, the disinterestedness of its purposes, and the valor of its youth unafraid to die.

On December 12 the *George Washington*, steaming through long lines of gray battleships over a gray sea amid the roar of guns and shoutings, dropped anchor at Brest, and an American President, for the first time, appeared in Europe to take part in a parliament of nations assembled to determine for years to come the course of history. Whether he should have gone at all, or only once, or by whom he should have been accompanied is a sea of fascinating but futile conjecture, upon which I shall not embark. Woodrow Wilson was not a master of manipulating men or of dramatizing himself, but a master and in some sense a slave of ideas and ideals. It seemed to him that it was his moral responsibility, under God, to go to Europe, heedless of the rocks ahead of him and the whirlpools behind him. It was a fearful responsibility to assume, for all the peace congresses of civilization, from Westphalia and Vienna to Paris, had satisfied nobody and had generally broken their creators. This congress was the gigantic legatee of the failures of all past congresses, and in none of these congresses of the past did any one man ever occupy a position of such terrible greatness.

I am sure Aristotle's fine summary of tragedy must often have visited his mind as his ship wended her way across the seas—"Tragedy, in its pure idea, shows us a mortal will engaged in an unequal struggle with destiny, whether that destiny be represented by the forces within or without the mind. The conflict reaches its tragic issue when the individual perishes; but, through his ruin, the disturbed order of the world is restored and the moral forces reassert their sway." Three underlying ideas and purposes, all born of American daring and American experience, guided his mind and drove him on. The first was faith in the whole kindling length and logic of democracy itself; faith in men, faith in the supremacy of spiritual force, given new sacredness by what he saw about him of suffering and death. The second was the essential democratic idea of the right of men everywhere to determine their own affairs. The third was the idea of cooperation of peoples, the partnership of opinion among democratic nations, which once had welded discordant States in a new world into a Federal Union, and might again weld discordant peoples in an old world into a parliament of man.

For six months, at the Congress of Paris, in an alien air surcharged with cynicism and suspicion, almost single handed he fought for these principles, buoyed and sustained in the first period of his struggle by high tides of hope and faith that surged up to him out of the bruised hearts of peoples who trusted him to lead them over the failure of

brute force into God's peace, and in the second period buffeted by the ebb tides of fading enthusiasm, of disintegrating unity, of selfish dominion, and ancient fears.

He had gone to Paris with the "fourteen points of peace," accepted alike by his Allies and by the Central Powers as the basis for the coming settlement. The "fourteen points" lived in his mind as a doctrine of international justice and the League of Nations was an integral part thereof, conceived as the medium to interpret and administer those principles of justice, and to introduce into the relations of modern states the idea of organic international cooperation based on reason. No man could have achieved this program in its entirety or secured a perfect peace of justice at Paris. Statesmanship of the most transcendent form could not have diagnosed, much less healed, that tremendous ailment of the world. The Versailles treaty, though a huge advance over any one of the five great treaties since Westphalia in sympathy and counsel with the peoples concerned, in the redress of bitter wrongs, in consideration for the weak and thought of the future, proved to be not God's peace. It was a peace shot through with the fear and resentment of suffering and ill-used men; a settlement corrupted by previous bargains among the allied powers made under the lure of traditional policies and the stern necessities of war and inconsistent with the high purpose of the charter which Wilson had presented for the guidance of the congress.

When the odium of nations and races began to beat upon him because he could not perform a task beyond mortal achievement, Wilson saw himself confronted with the alternative of world-wide chaos and disintegration or an imperfect peace with the League of Nations. He could not, with his vast sense of political and social institutions, postpone by headstrong and willful conduct the normal and peaceful ordering of men's lives.

Woodrow Wilson was not a revolutionist. Political reform by "red ruin and the breaking up of laws" was not in his blood. He chose the League of Nations, surrendering, in the anguish of compromise, such portions of his doctrine of international justice as he could not get. I am of those who believe that he gained more than he sacrificed at Versailles, and I know that he alone among mortal men could have salvaged out of that sea of passion the League of Nations, the bravest and most reasonable effort to rationalize national relations in political history. The statement sometimes made that he fell beaten down by the superior adroitness and intelligence of his European colleagues is a piece of analysis entitling its author to a high place in any hierarchy of inferior minds. What was liberal in the Versailles treaty Wilson's faith and courage helped to put there. What was reactionary he fought against to the limit of his strength and accepted only to gain an instrument which he believed had in it power to purge and correct.

He had the heart to match the moral hopes of mankind against their passions. He sought to give the twentieth century a faith to inspire it and to justify the sacrifice of millions of lives; and if there was failure in Jan Smut's words, it was humanity's failure. To make him, the one undaunted advocate of those hopes, the scapegoat of a world collapse is to visit upon him injustice so cruel that it must perish of its own unreason. Therefore I do not envisage Woodrow Wilson as a failure as he came back to these shores bearing

in his hands the covenant of the league and the imperfect treaty itself. I envisage him rather as a victor and conqueror as he returned to America, untouched by sordidness or dishonor, unsurpassed in moral devotion, and offering to his country leadership in the broadest and worthiest cause in all the story of human struggle for a better life. What statesman in the history of world adjustment in defense of a code of shining, if unattainable, idealism had ever borne himself more stoutly or battled with such foes or achieved with so little support at home or abroad, so astounding a result?

When President Wilson first sailed for Europe in December, 1918, American sentiment, irrespective of party, generally approved his declared purpose to incorporate in the treaty of peace some sort of league covenant. The heart of the time was then in tune with the age-old dream. The President of the United States had a right to assume that the American people were behind him on the issue of the League of Nations, notwithstanding the adverse verdict of the electorate on his general policies. Eight years before, in 1910, in his Nobel lecture, Theodore Roosevelt himself said:

"It would be a master stroke if those great powers honestly bent on peace would form a league of peace not only to keep the peace among themselves but to prevent, by force if necessary, its being broken by others. The man or statesman who should bring about such a condition would have earned his place in history for all time and his title to the gratitude of all mankind."

A list of eminent Americans of all parties then in line with that pronouncement in 1918 would be an illuminating contribution to the higher impulses of that era.

When he returned a different spectacle met his eyes. The great cause for which he had even then given his life had become confused with a group of political policies given by his enemies the generic name of Wilsonism, and about this raged the wrath, despair, and hatred of the overstrained time. The tired warrior of the common good, who had kept the faith, fought the fight, and won a victory, instead of hearing the acclaim of his own people, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," saw himself ringed about with foes of mind to rend and destroy him.

I can not give time here to determining whether Wilson himself was to blame, in tactical judgment alone, or how much he was to blame for the change in American opinion; nor do I deny that honest men opposed the league and the treaty; nor do I undertake the task of apportioning with nice justice the responsibility for the caldron of heat and "swelter'd venom" of deadlock and indecision, of partisanship and passion, in which for weary months this largest question of modern times boiled and bubbled. Other ages will make that solemn appraisement. I may be permitted the reflection that something less of malice in the hearts of his enemies, and something more of compromise in his own heart, and something more of political genius and firm purpose in the hearts of those who held the faith, and there might have been another world!

I have lately been reading, and I wish all of his countrymen might one day quietly read, the 30 speeches made by the President on that fateful western tour which he undertook in September, 1919, in order to secure from the American people the stamp of approval which he desired for his work in Europe, and which the American

Senate was unwilling to give. There is no series of political speeches, made under circumstances of such strain, in our annals attaining a higher level of oratory and exposition. He was forewarned, as he fared forth, that his life might be the forfeit of his enterprise. He replied, "I would forfeit my life to attain the end I seek," and he meant it; for he was incapable of melodramatic pose, and the consecration of that statement runs like a thread of gold through the sustained appeal.

Undeterred by the stabbing of physical pain and failing strength Woodrow Wilson here reveals the scope and depth of his conviction that national isolation for America or any country is forever ended; that the outlawry of war is democracy's next great task; that suicide hovers over civilization in the present system of the relation of states and the present potentialities of destructive warfare; that the hour has struck for the creation of an instrument to gather behind it the organized manhood of the world, bent upon evolving a clearer international conscience, a firmer international law substituting reason for passion in human affairs, and that the covenant of the League of Nations is such an instrument if mankind will but adapt it to its uses. This is the Wilsonism that the quiet justice of humanity will remember throughout the ages. But all this force and eloquence and martyrdom were to avail nothing. Woodrow Wilson fell stricken as if in battle at Pueblo, Colo., on September 25, 1919, and came home shorn of his unmatched strength to persuade and move the hearts of his countrymen.

The American Senate, in the plain discharge of its constitutional duty, discussed the treaty for a period of eight months, during five months of which period the President struggled against mortal illness, rejected it on March 20, and elected to remain outside the first organized scheme of international cooperation in modern history.

The last words spoken to the people at Pueblo by the President were these: "Now that the mists of this great question have cleared away, I believe that men will see the truth, eye to eye and face to face. There is one thing that the American people always rise to and extend their hand to, and that is the truth of justice, liberty, and peace. We have accepted that truth, and it is going to lead us, and through us the world out into pastures of quietness and peace such as this world never dreamed of before." The prophecy of the stricken advocate of reason has not yet come true. There are those who hope and believe that it will never come true. It is not seemly that I should here attempt any controversial discussion; but I should lack the courage of the man I seek to interpret if I did not, as an American citizen, cry out, even in this Chamber, God grant that it may come true and gain new authority to protect mankind against its imminent dangers.

It is commonly said that the historic rank of Woodrow Wilson is wrapped up in the destiny of the covenant; that if it fails, his rank will be merely that of one more radiant spirit whose reach exceeded his grasp, and if it succeeds, his apotheosis in history is secure. I find the formula too glib and automatic for the forces and ideas it presumes to envelop. Apotheosis and immortality are weighty words that ill fit our poor flesh, so foredoomed to the iniquity of earthly oblivion; but surely the fame of Woodrow Wilson does not rest upon

an instrument the orderly growth of which into final usefulness may so change its structure and modify its form as to cause it to become another and an even better instrument. It depends upon an unconquerable idea, so greatly conceived and set forth that it must continue to grow and is now growing into new and finer form, and his fame must grow with it into whatever bright renown it may attain.

Posterity will be eager to have knowledge of the personality and the salient qualities of a statesman set apart to play such a rôle in the world's affairs. I shall picture him as I knew him—not the Wilson whom mankind will remember as the stern war leader of a mighty nation; but another Wilson, known to me—a Wilson of sprightliness and humor and handsome courtesy, of kindly countenance and fascinating conversation with power to "beguile you into being informed beyond your worth, and wise beyond your birthright." The sensitive shyness and reserve that clings to men who can not capitalize their personal advantages to win friends clung to him. Intimacies were sacred relations to his spirit, but these intimacies could not overflow into inveterate amiability. He did not wear his heart on his sleeve for daws to peck at; but tenderness governed his demeanor with those he trusted; and he wore about him a quiet grace of dignity.

Woodrow Wilson was a deeply religious man. Men who do not understand the religious spirit need not even try to understand him. No man in supreme power in any nation's life, since Gladstone, was so profoundly penetrated by the Christian faith. He was sturdily and mystically Christian. He took God Almighty in earnest as the Supreme Reality, and he carried Him into his home and saw His immanence and guidance in private and public life. He had the habit of prayer, and he read and reread the English Bible. Through all his speeches flamed the glory of an insistent belief that morality and politics should march hand in hand. Many of his tendencies, perhaps the most of them that occasioned debate and censure, sprang from his pragmatic belief in God. There was actually such a thing as God's will to this man; and when he thought he had divined that will, he knew the right, the absolute right, and he was prepared to stand on that, if friends deserted him or he parted company with friends, if applause came or if the blow fell. "Interest divides men; what unites them is the common pursuit of right," was one of his great utterances, and not unlike the stout-hearted old medieval bishops, he stood ready to wield sword or bludgeon if the foe showed his face. "God save us from compromise," "Let's stop being merely practical, and find out what's right," were phrases often on his lips.

It was the Christian philosophy at work in his spirit that placed him almost instinctively on the side of the common man and against the privileged and the powerful. Wilson could be, and sometimes was, aloof and unrelenting to this or that friend or foe; but mankind, in the mass, never failed to soften his spirit and awaken his emotions. He would have gone to the stake to protect mankind, as a whole, from tyranny and injustice; but the ambitions of any individual man, even a friend, stirred him slightly. His greatest defect as a leader of men was this shrinking from human contacts at close range. When he had proved the rightness of his case and stated it boldly, a strange, moral fastidiousness and loyalty to the overlordship of reason prevented him from seeking to win men to

his side by talking it over in whispers or by sweet and soothing persuasiveness. As Augustine Birrell said of Carlyle, "It seemed to him to be his duty to teach, not to tickle mankind." This inhibition left him a master of ideas, but not a master of using men, and substituted admiration and respect for love and enthusiasm in the nature of the mass of his followers.

Wilson evoked no such popular devotion as did Henry Clay or James G. Blaine or Theodore Roosevelt. Men of his prophetic quality rarely do. Edmund Burke once said of Charles James Fox, with a deep sigh, "He was made to be loved." That sigh often, no doubt, stirred in Woodrow Wilson's heart. He was a selfless man in so far as personal glory or profit was concerned. It was "perfection, not renown" that allured him. It was God's praise, not men's praise that gave him strength. The ambition which drove him to preeminence was the ambition to create new ideals or to reillumine old, neglected ones. Intellectually he does not belong with Kant or Burke or Hamilton or John Marshall; but he had a brain of high order, functioning in a different atmosphere and a broader field, a brain which worked straight and quick; and he suffered ill, fools and those of untidy minds. I should call his greatest mental gifts the power to look into the future, to assemble facts, to marshal his propositions in due order, to generalize fairly and to state his interpretations with such terseness and soundness, that they sank into minds that listened.

As an Executive, he was not an incarnation of action like Napoleon or Roosevelt. The lightning decision was not after his manner; but his industry was tireless, his judgment of men sound, and his mind did its own thinking, and men could not frighten or deceive or cajole him. The possession of a tenacious memory enabled him to keep the whole before him, to dispense with threshing around, and to dread irrelevance and bombast. No dogmatism or abruptness controlled his relations to men who approached his problem from the same angle. He gave his entire trust to those who worked with him, defended them against injustice, and upheld them against slander or misrepresentation.

The world used to be full of people busy in discerning, imagining, and cataloguing the faults of Woodrow Wilson. Dogmatist and hermit, rhetorician and pacifist, egocentric and ingrate, dreamer and drifter were some of the milder coinages of his more civil and restrained enemies. Well, he had his faults. I am not here to portray or to defend his faults. Some of them were protective devices to conserve physical strength, and others lay buried deep in the impulses in his blood; but inhibitions born of pride and courage and high ambition are such as nations learn to forget and to forgive, and even to love and cherish. Posterity is incurious about the minor faults of its heroes. England does not concern itself with the flaws of Nelson and William Pitt. Men do not remember Andrew Jackson's stubbornness and prejudice. They recall only the fury and fire of his purpose to preserve the Federal Union.

His countrymen will not forever remember the volubility and histrionic arts of Theodore Roosevelt, but they will never let die the memory of the valiant force of him penetrating the Nation's spirit, increasing the sum of its energies, awakening youth to high

adventure, and stridently proclaiming the glory of upright living. They do not tattle about Washington's blazing profanity at Monmouth, but see his stately figure riding into the storm of battle beneath the tattered flag of a new nation he would fain bring into the world. They do not whisper about Lincoln's choice of companions or his taste in anecdotes or his cunning in politics; but they read incised on white marble walls the sacred poems which his literary genius has left to posterity, behold him in the night watches correcting his mistakes and using even his humility as a sword with which to carve out the victory of his cause. And so it will be with Woodrow Wilson in the long perspective of the years. The destiny in his blood decided that he should possess—

> The unconquerable will * * *
> And courage never to submit or yield,
> And what is else not to be overcome.

His ambition to serve his country was as intense as Cromwell's. It was not easy for him to forget or to forgive. The pride of righteousness sometimes froze the more genial currents of his soul, but he was willing to die, and did die, to guarantee to humble men a fairer chance in a juster world, and therefore the savage assaults of his enemies will shrivel into the insignificance of Horace Greeley's editorials against Lincoln's policies, or the futility of the early century pamphleteers against Thomas Jefferson as iconoclast and antichrist, and his mere detractors will themselves either attain a repellant fame as detractors of greatness or else they will pass out of memory and no one will ask

> Who or what they have been
> More than he asks what waves
> Of the midmost ocean have swelled,
> Foamed for a moment and gone.

The four closing years in the life of Woodrow Wilson were harsh, unheroic, uninspiring years in public affairs, such as generally follow the emotional climaxes of war, and it is a commonplace to describe them as years of personal tragedy to him. A vast disillusionment, a chaos miscalled peace, a kind of shamefacedness and cynicism in the recollection of its dreams and faith in the triumph of moral ideals, seemed to hold the Nation and the world in its grasp. As far as Woodrow Wilson himself was concerned, it is well perhaps not to confuse the bodily pain, the palsied side, and all the cold malignities of the time with the essential meaning of those years. Adversity had been wanting in his career, and now it was come upon him, and he was to have acquaintance with its sublime refinement, and the country was to gain knowledge of its power to smite the hearts of just men with love for the baffled fighter who had known none too much of popular affection in his career of self-reliant conquest.

He carried his head high in the dying days of his public service, omitting no duty his strength could bear, meeting the gracious courtesy of his successor at the end with an equal courtesy, as they rode away from the White House, so deeply associated in American history with memories of sorrow and pain, as well as pomp and power, while unseen of human eyes to each of them alike "tragedy with sceptered pall comes sweeping by."

In the days left to him as the first private citizen of the Republic, unlike Burke, he did not waste his strength in windy opposition or factious controversy. He wrote no memoirs. "With my historical sense, how could I be my own biographer," he said. He exploited in no way his wide fame, uttered no complaint, suffered no pity, displayed no vain glory. It was as if a great gentleman, "weary of the weight of this unintelligible world," sought his peace at last in a quiet home luminous with love and perfect care, and shut out at last from the noises and the storm. From this sanctuary, day by day, it was given him to behold the processes of his own immortality, as simple men and women gathered about his home and perceived in his wan image the poignant symbol of their great days and the historic link forever binding them to noble enthusiasms.

The very depth and dignity of his silence won through to the imagination of men, and when he spoke, the world stood at attention heartened to have knowledge that his high hopes for mankind were undimmed, and that there was no faltering in that firm faith of his that liberty guided by reason and not by force was the contribution of his century to human advancement. I doubt not that regrets visited his mind for lost opportunities that might have been better used; as he reviewed the pageant of his life in these long sequestered days; but a durable satisfaction must needs have fortified his soul, that even the devil's advocate must bear witness that—

> He had loved no darkness,
> Sophisticated no truth,
> Allowed no fear.

A grace which his heart craved came in the exaltation and excitement of the vision of a valiant new generation on the march, intent to light its torches at the still burning fire of his purpose to substitute for the arbitrament of war and death the reign of law, to restore to the land of his love and his loyalty its surrendered ascendancy, and to guarantee to the principles he had fought for eternal validity. The puzzle and complex of his dual nature seemed at last to fall into a mold of simplicity and consistency. "We die but once, and we die without distinction if we are not willing to die the death of sacrifice. Honor and distinction come only as rewards for service to mankind." Thus Woodrow Wilson had spoken in the days of his strength to high-hearted American youth, and now he could of right claim the supreme distinction as his very own! And so even as death enfolded him in its shadows, men paused in their busy lives and came to comprehend that a man of great faith had lived in their era, akin in heart and blood to John Milton and John Hampden, Mazzini, and Luther, that a prophet had guided their country and stirred the heart of mankind in an hour of destiny, and that an incorruptible liberal aflame with will to advance the slow ascent of man had joined those whom men call immortal and stood among that high fellowship,

> Constant as the Northern Star
> Of whose true, fixed, and lasting quality,
> There is no fellow in the firmament.

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